CDAC
NETWORK

# Policy Paper

**The Role of Collective Platforms, Services and Tools to support Communication and Community Engagement in Humanitarian Action**

April 2017

# Acknowledgements

# Acronyms and abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| **AAP** | Accountability to affected populations |
| **BBC MA** | BBC Media Action |
| **BPRM** | Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration |
| **CDAC Network** | Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities Network |
| **CHS** | Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability |
| **CoP** | Community of practice |
| **CwC** | Communicating with communities |
| **DEPP** | Disasters and Emergencies Preparedness Programme |
| **DFAT** | Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade |
| **DFID** | UK Department for International Development |
| **HC** | Humanitarian Coordinator |
| **HCT** | Humanitarian Country Team |
| **I/NGOs** | International/Non-Governmental Organisations |
| **IASC** | Inter Agency Standing Committee |
| **ICCM** | Inter cluster coordination mechanism |
| **IFRC** | International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies |
| **OFDA** | The Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance |
| **RC** | Resident Coordinator |
| **SCHR** | Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response |
| **Sida** | Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency |
| **ToR** | Terms of reference |
| **USAID** | United States Agency for International Development |
| **WHS** | World Humanitarian Summit |

# Table of Contents

# Executive summary

A lengthy process took place in the run up to the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit to examine the humanitarian system and make clear recommendations for reform. But the resulting Agenda for Humanity and Grand Bargain, which call for a 'participation revolution', will amount to little unless there are intentional, collective efforts to better engage communities prior to, during and after disasters.

It is time for the international humanitarian architecture to redefine its role. It should exist to augment national humanitarian capacities, fully engaging affected communities by providing them the right information at the right time, consulting them on decisions that affect them and enabling people to stay connected or reconnect to each other. For this to occur, leaders and policymakers urgently need to undertake policy and operational changes.

Opportunities to engage with people in crisis abound, as do potential ways to improve communications capacities among affected communities. However, rarely is this work well-coordinated, nor is its impact assessed. Frameworks and commitments exist, such as the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) on Quality and Accountability, but are not consistently adhered to. The Grand Bargain underlined the necessity to establish a 'common' or 'collective' service for community engagement so that affected people can directly influence decision-making during any response.[1]

Various collective approaches to communication and community engagement have been implemented to support humanitarian coordination, both during and in preparation for crises. Whilst there is agreement that such activities make better use of partners' resources, improve coordination and build local capacity, they are rarely systematically implemented through existing humanitarian coordination structures. Ad hoc attempts at accessing funding and defining strategies post-disaster have frequently resulted in a lack of collective accountability and poor coordination, leaving gaps and creating duplication.

There has been limited lesson-sharing between response teams and a lack of systematic inclusion of collective approaches at the operational (inter-sector) and strategic (Humanitarian Country Team) levels, throughout the stages of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC). There are many reasons for this: a lack of understanding of the added value of collective approaches (both for affected communities and implementing agencies); belief that collective models imply 'additional and parallel structures'; and the need for specialised personnel – all at a perceived cost and complexity that is not appealing. Other reasons include individual agency desire for data ownership; competing mandates; limited flexibility to adapt programming based on feedback; and potential protection concerns.

Despite these acknowledged challenges there are clear benefits. These include the potential for collective development and standardisation of tools; improved coordination and efficiencies; ability to have greater outreach and therefore increased understanding of trends and issues affecting populations; potential to reduce confusion, tensions and conflict with and between communities through consistency of messaging; and stronger advocacy based on collective messages.

Different examples of good practice and lessons learned from multi-agency initiatives have been identified including the establishment of collective platforms in a range of contexts; the establishment of preparedness activities; development of guidance; and use of standard formats and templates for gathering feedback.

This paper confirms that the establishment of collective approaches to communication and community engagement – at national and global levels - is required and has significant support across the humanitarian sector.

At national level, the shape and functions of mechanisms will vary according to context, based on needs and capacities. Such mechanisms should undertake preparedness actions to ensure that response actors are well-placed to integrate communication and community engagement. They should be able to ensure the collection and analysis of feedback data in order to highlight trends that can inform activities. They should act as a service to existing and emerging humanitarian architecture, particularly those that support government-led and localised

---

[1] **The Grand Bargain** is an agreement between more than 30 of the biggest donors and aid providers, which aims to get more means into the hands of people in need.

> " *The establishment of collective approaches to communication and community engagement – at national and global levels - is required and has significant support across the humanitarian sector* "

responses. They should never be considered a stand-alone sector.

At the global level, a collective service would support national ones; gathering and disseminating good practice; developing standard materials for adaptation at country level; and providing guidance and advice.

The collective global service and national mechanisms would require temporary dedicated seed funding for set-up, followed by the reallocation of funding from existing streams in the medium term. Securing this funding would require evidence of effectiveness in order to contribute to strong advocacy messages. Ultimately, with the objective of ensuring that the service and mechanisms are fully integrated into the humanitarian architecture, all funding would be sourced through reallocation from operations across the system.

## Recommendations

To support the potential for collective communication and community engagement at national and global levels, eight recommendations for future action are proposed:[2]

### Recommendation 1

International humanitarian organisations should recognise and use existing local and national mechanisms for collective communication and community engagement mechanisms.

### Recommendation 2

All humanitarian actors should understand and analyse local communications contexts and stakeholders to prepare for or pre-position context-specific platforms at the national level with support through a global service until fully integrated into the humanitarian architecture.

### Recommendation 3

All NGO, UN and Red Cross entities should integrate communication and community engagement throughout their organisational humanitarian programme cycle as well as in collaborative processes such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) and Emergency Response Preparedness (ERP) Plans.

### Recommendation 4

All humanitarian actors should promote, operationalise and strictly adhere to organisational and system-wide commitments and principles on quality and accountability.

### Recommendation 5

Donor agencies need to meet their commitment to improved communication and community engagement through increased and flexible humanitarian financing.

### Recommendation 6

All humanitarian organisations should integrate collective actions on communication and community engagement into emergency preparedness.

### Recommendation 7

The CDAC Network should consolidate and disseminate good practice on communication and community engagement.

### Recommendation 8

Humanitarian organisations should include communications technologies and media actors in communication and community engagement fora both nationally and globally, including in key coordination or inter-agency initiatives in a response.

---

[2] Please see full document for details on each recommendation.

# 1. Introduction and background

The importance of communication and community engagement is consistently highlighted across the spectrum of humanitarian action. The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) and Grand Bargain have underlined the need to establish a "common" or "collective" service for community engagement, so that disaster affected people can directly influence strategic decision-making during a response.

With more opportunities than ever before to improve community engagement in crisis, one of the CDAC Network Strategic Aims for 2016-2021 is to strengthen collaboration to make these efforts more effective.

The Network's goal is to facilitate the creation of a collective platform enabling a range of stakeholders to come together to share tools and services. In every "at risk" country, this would mean the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) agreeing in advance on which agency should coordinate community engagement. This could be an NGO, a UN body, a member of the International Red Cross Red and Crescent Movement, or a media development organisation depending on which entity has the best local knowledge, capacity and expertise.

Leading or co-leading the collective platform would not replace agencies' accountability in respecting their global responsibilities and commitments on communication and accountability to affected people (AAP). However, the collective platform, linked to humanitarian architecture, would render these efforts better coordinated, more timely and effective. It would make a significant contribution to achieving greater participation and ownership as envisaged by the Grand Bargain commitments of the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs). Where collective feedback mechanisms are established, agreement on who is accountable for ensuring that feedback and complaints are addressed will be required.

This is of specific importance in relation to sensitive issues and there will be a need to establish procedures and protocols.

---

The **Grand Bargain** includes a series of changes in the working practices of donors and aid organisations that would deliver an extra billion dollars over five years for people in need of humanitarian aid.

These changes include gearing up cash programming, greater funding for national and local responders and cutting bureaucracy through harmonised reporting requirements.

The Grand Bargain commits donors and aid organizations to providing 25 per cent of global humanitarian funding to local and national responders by 2020, along with more un-earmarked money, and increased multi-year funding to ensure greater predictability and continuity in humanitarian response, among other commitments.

> " *Leading or co-leading the collective platform would not replace agencies' accountability in respecting their global responsibilities and commitments on communication and accountability to affected people (AAP)* "

## CDAC Network Strategic Aims 2016-2021

**1. Strengthen collaboration for more effective communication and community engagement**
   a. Convening and collaboration
   b. Support common services: Invest in country-level and inter-agency multi-stakeholder platforms

**2. Advocate for systemic change to put the voices of communities at the heart of humanitarian preparedness and response**
   a. Community voices
   b. Information
   c. Operational change

**3. Strengthen learning and support the production of evidence about communication and community engagement**
   a. Building an evidence base
   b. Guidance, tools and good practice
   c. Library of resources
   d. Capacity development and roster development

Red Crescent

**Bangladesh Roanu Cyclone Action**

# 2. Purpose of the paper

This policy paper outlines the potential role of collective platforms, services and tools to support communication and community engagement in humanitarian preparedness and response.

It describes benefits, gaps and challenges in current approaches. It highlights existing frameworks and commitments and provides a brief overview of good practices. Finally, recommendations are proposed to highlight and enable operationalisation of collective platforms, services and tools.

The paper supports CDAC Network's ongoing advocacy on collective approaches. It links closely to the "Communication and community engagement initiative" which has a multi-stakeholder steering group, convened by CDAC Network and currently co-chaired by UNICEF and UNOCHA.[3] It is envisaged that the paper will be used as a key reference by the group as it tests a number of models for collective working across the globe.[4]

[3] Current Steering Group members: CDAC Network, CHS Alliance, Ground Truth, IFRC, IASC AAP/PSEA Taskteam, Internews, NEAR Network, SCHR, WHO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOCHA, and World Vision.
[4] The Communication and community engagement initiative: Towards a collective service for more effective response, Concept Note and Workplan 1 January 2017 – 31 December 2019.

# 3. Target audience

This paper targets decision-makers and responders in the humanitarian sector; in particular, leaders and organisations that have adapted a collective, systems-wide approach to change in humanitarian response, while remaining cognisant of their individual and organisational responsibilities.

# 4. Methodology

This paper has been drafted by an independent consultant commissioned by the CDAC Network. Two approaches were adopted to inform the content:
- Semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders and key informants, and
- Review of secondary data and documentation.[5]

A total of 68 individuals were contacted for interview and an additional email was sent to CDAC-N members soliciting further contributions. A total of 47 interviews were undertaken with representatives from 26 stakeholder organisations at global and national levels.[6]


Red Crescent

**Volunteers warning dissemination in Cox's Bazar**

[5] See Annex 1 for bibliography. CDAC Network has undertaken operational research on communicating with communities for more than five years and this was further analysed as part of the review.
[6] See Annex 2 for list of organisations consulted.

# 5. Existing frameworks and commitments

There are various global frameworks and commitments with components specific to communication and community engagement. Whilst these describe what action needs to be taken they are not consistently and coherently taken on board by humanitarian actors. They include:

- The Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) AAP Commitments
- The IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action
- IASC Emergency Directors Group Preliminary Guidance Note – Protection and Accountability to Affected Populations in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC)
- The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability
- The Principles of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Response Programmes
- The Red Cross Movement Guide to Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA)
- The Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response
- The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) Grand Bargain
- UNICEF Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action[7]

Accountability to affected people was a key theme of the May 2016 WHS and Grand Bargain. A dedicated commitment focuses on a participation revolution, through which agencies and donors commit to include people receiving aid in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. Forty-five stakeholders made individual commitments in this area. The participation revolution commitment urges humanitarian actors to:

- Dialogue with and listen to affected people and communities, including to those most vulnerable and those most at risk;
- Act based on what they heard;
- Give feedback on the decisions and the action they took;
- Receive feedback on how their response was received;
- Adapt their action based on the feedback received;
- Provide accessible, timely and relevant information.

The IASC AAP commitments and the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) in particular, outline three essential components that are required of humanitarian responses in relation to communication and community engagement:

- Participation;
- Feedback and complaints mechanisms;
- Information provision.

These frameworks and commitments are influencing thinking on key elements of collective models.

[7] See separate CDAC Network note titled: "Global frameworks and commitments on communication and community engagement" for more detail on the frameworks and relevant communication and community engagement commitments.

## Box 1: Examples of donor requirements in relation to communication and community engagement

The following are examples of donor requirements to consider communication and community engagement in partner requests for funding:

**Australian DFAT** requires its partners to show that they can be accountable to affected populations through accountability frameworks.

**Canadian DFAT** asks that the perspectives of the poor and marginalised groups in communities have their concerns, needs, and priorities integrated in the initiatives meant to address the development challenges they face.

**UK DFID** partners are asked to ensure that mechanisms are in place for obtaining regular, accurate feedback covering their views on assistance received and the organisations providing it. Partners need to show how feedback is collected and acted upon to improve relevance, appropriateness, equity, effectiveness and value for money. **Norad** highlights beneficiary participation as a central part of humanitarian assistance specifying that engagement with crisis affected people is a right.

**Sida** supports efforts that aim to enhance the capacity of affected populations to demand accountability from local and national authorities and institutions as well as humanitarian organisations.

**USAID/BPRM/OFDA** require partners to take into account beneficiary feedback and it is a funding requirement that partners have a framework for this. This has been a legal requirement since 2016. However, the focus is not yet on collective approaches.

" *Approaches need to promote local leadership and local action and grow organically* "

# 6. The problem

There is broad agreement in the humanitarian sector, both at the practitioner and leadership level, that communication and community engagement contributes to greater effectiveness and value for money.

Despite many organisations and governments committing to this, action to make this happen as part of preparedness and response is not undertaken systematically.

With each sudden onset disaster, many agencies scramble to access resources and bring into line their communication and community engagement strategies, leaving a gap at a critical time.

In protracted crises, the issues become more complex due to funding and access constraints. Mid-disaster, agencies often struggle to reach consensus on the approach and coordination of communication and community engagement efforts in a given context. As a result, this critical area of work is often ad hoc, underfunded, uncoordinated and risks being ineffective.

- Agencies do not systematically assess the social and cultural norms and practices that affect how affected populations receive, understand and act on information during health or humanitarian emergencies;

- Affected populations do not receive the information they need (or receive conflicting information) to make informed decisions in a timely manner;

- Affected populations receive information that they cannot understand, due to language or literacy barriers;

- Views of affected people seldom inform the design of humanitarian responses which remain supply-driven, largely based on what different actors can deliver;

- Feedback collected by different agencies is not harmonised (or lacks common approaches in terms of analysis, anonymisation, aggregation and sharing). It is rarely a result of intentional collection exercises based on clear performance indicators, thus seldom

" *Affected populations do not receive the information they need (or receive conflicting information) to make informed decisions in a timely manner* "

acted upon, reducing the possibility to adjust the overall response with the necessary course correction;

- Local and national responders who work closely with affected communities do not always have a central role in existing coordination mechanisms and the valuable information that they have is not captured;

- The extent to which messages going to and coming from affected communities are understood is not always clear.

Putting in place collective approaches, including preparedness, will contribute to more systematic application of lessons learned; promote sharing of skills; and help to ensure that work is more predictable, better coordinated and consistently resourced.

The function of a collective service is likely to vary depending on context, at times promoting and trying to ensure joint as opposed to individual (agency or sector) approaches to communication and community engagement and in other situations having a coordination function with a focus on ensuring that individual approaches are at least complementary.

Approaches need to promote local leadership and local action and grow organically.

" *Agencies do not systematically assess the social and cultural norms and practices that affect how affected populations receive, understand and act on information during health or humanitarian emergencies* "

# 7. Work to date on exploring potential solutions

Aid organisations have been communicating and engaging with communities for decades. What is new is the systematic approach currently being tested and proposed as a new way of working based on learning from disasters and connecting community engagement explicitly to decision-making.

A range of partners are already involved in different intentional efforts to improve communication and community engagement including the UN, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, international and national non-governmental organisations (I/NGOs), media networks, telecommunications and technology companies, civil society and the private sector.

Some of the historical key steps towards more collective ways of working, tested and refined by CDAC-N members, include:

- **2010:** In the immediate aftermath of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, the CDAC Network undertook its first ground initiative. It sought to provide a "system-wide communication coordination mechanism" – to enable humanitarian operations to get life-saving information to affected populations and to channel their voices back to aid actors.

  It was largely funded through the OCHA Emergency Relief Response Fund and later the World Health Organisation.[8]

- **2013:** The CDAC Network began advocating for more predictable "common services" in 2013 following gaps in the response to Typhoon Bopha in the Philippines[9] and subsequent disasters.[10]

  From 2013-2015, the CDAC-N Secretariat chaired inter-agency meetings on a possible "common service" model in support of humanitarian organisations and clusters, with the dual purpose of collectively providing information to affected people and collecting, aggregating and analysing feedback from communities to influence decision-making processes at strategic and operational levels.

- **2014:** CDAC-N awarded funding under DFID's Disasters and Emergencies Preparedness Programme (DEPP) to support national level platforms in Bangladesh and South Sudan. CDAC-N partnered with ACAPS to develop a suite of common tools to assess the information and communication needs of communities affected by disasters and delivering training in it.[11]

- **2015:** In October 2015, a CDAC-N meeting[12] broadly agreed on a minimum viable model with the following the objectives:
  a. Enable humanitarian actors to communicate with affected people, and enable affected people to communicate amongst themselves and with aid providers.
  b. Ensure perceptions of affected people about the humanitarian response are integrated into decision making (e.g. through a 'hub' for inter-agency information).
  c. Ensure communities' information needs are met in a coherent and coordinated way.

- **2016:** In April 2016, UNICEF, the International Federation or Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and OCHA in cooperation with CDAC Network co-hosted a workshop with over 40 organisations to define how to collaborate on collective mechanisms and make them operational.

## Lessons learned

The 2016 workshop emphasised lessons learned and in particular the "importance of:
i.  empowering affected people through the provision of life-saving information, essential for affected people to make informed decisions and gain control over their lives; and
ii. ensuring collective and systematic participation of affected communities in shaping aid priorities and program design to ensure that the assistance is accountable, relevant and adapted to needs.

Participatory needs assessments and monitoring and evaluation were highlighted as important means to this end".[13]

---

8  CDAC Haiti Learning Review, Final Report, by Cecilia M. Ljungman, 2012
9  CDAC Network Typhoon Bopha Learning Review, 2013. Available at www.cdacnetwork.org/tools-and-resources/evaluations-and-learning-reviews/
10  See Annex 2
11  See http://www.cdacnetwork.org/i/20140721170540-7vd0o/
12  CDAC Network, Common Service Workshop: Summary and Next Steps, 9 October 2015, hosted by Plan UK, London, including representatives from DFID and the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster. At this meeting a Steering Group was established of the following CDAC-N members: GroundTruth, Internews, UNICEF, UNOCHA, and World Vision International.
13  Report on "Strengthening Communication, Community Engagement and Social Mobilisation in Humanitarian Emergencies", Workshop, 26 April 2016, Ecumenical Centre, Geneva, Summary Note and Key Conclusions"

- **2017:** UNICEF, OCHA, IFRC and partners, under the auspices of CDAC Network, established the Communication and Community Engagement Initiative (CCEI). It aims to organise a collective service to address the need for a more systematic and coordinated approach to communications and community engagement with affected people. The service is envisaged to act as a support function to complement and elevate ongoing efforts in given contexts. In a cluster system, for example, the service would be integrated within the inter-cluster coordination mechanism.[14]

Linking with the wider collective service initiative, a number of CDAC-N members together with strategic partners are exploring collaborative relationships to expand the scope of their existing service provision in specialised areas.

While the initial focus of discussions related to the potential for collective approaches was on sudden onset natural disasters there has been more recent learning from complex conflict and public health emergencies.[16] This includes the ongoing work of the Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team (STAIT) on exploring collective accountability models to strengthen the effectiveness of humanitarian response.

There remains the need however, for further consideration as to how collective services can be structured and sustained in diverse contextual environments as well as throughout protracted crises (including those with regional and multi-country implications) and crises which receive limited funding and resources.



**CDAC Foundational training in Bangladesh**

DEPP

# The ENGAGE Collaborative

An Independent Collaborative on Engagement and Assessment in Humanitarian Emergencies between ACAPS, Ground Truth Solutions and Internews. It seeks to provide an advanced set of assessment, feedback and communication services to the humanitarian community and populations affected by disaster as soon as disaster strikes and to continue doing so until alternative arrangements are in place or the need for its services recedes.[15]

# The Humanitarian Common Language Platform

The Humanitarian Common Language Platform, a developing collaboration between Translators without Borders, UN partner agencies and the private sector aims to have openly available parallel datasets for text and voice to be used for development of technology tools in approximately key crisis pivot languages; includes openly usable content in key areas of crisis response, preparedness and humanitarian practices. The goal is to further enable communities to control the content they need, in the way they need it.

" *In a cluster system, the service would be integrated within the inter-cluster coordination mechanism* "

[14] See briefing note on the CCEI at http://www.cdacnetwork.org/i/20170809164937-cx7b5. The Initiative is led by a core group: UNICEF, OCHA, IFRC and CDAC Secretariat with a wider Steering Group composed of: other CDAC Members; CHS Alliance; SCHR; Near Network; IASC AAP/PSEA Task team; and among other key actors

[15] ACAPS, Ground Truth Solutions, Internews, Proposal for Independent Collaborative on Engagement and Assessment in Humanitarian Emergencies, February 2017

[16] See for example WHO/CDAC-N collective initiatives in addressing the Ebola, Zika and Yellow Fever crisis; and, the GPPi Report on "Listening to Communities in Insecure Environments", by Lotte Ruppert, Elias Sagmeister, Julia Steets, Secure Access in Volatile Environments (SAVE), November 2016

# 8. Approaches to collective working

Various collective approaches to communication and community engagement have been implemented both during and in preparation for crises.

Some have been established in sudden onset disasters (e.g. Haiti earthquake/hurricane; the Philippines in Typhoon Bopha and Haiyan; Nepal earthquake); others in conflict (e.g. Yemen; Iraq; South Sudan); and, still others in readiness for disasters with an emphasis on pre-positioning relationships and strengthening knowledge and skills (e.g. 'Shongjog', the Multi-Stakeholder Platform for Communicating with Communities in Bangladesh). Each mechanism has different contextually-relevant goals and objectives.

Reflecting on approaches piloted in different contexts, there is growing agreement that collective services and mechanisms for communication and community engagement

- support to advocacy activities (e.g. South and East Africa Region);

- the development of guidance at a global level (notably by the IASC through its Emergency Disaster Group's Preliminary Guidance Note on Protection and Accountability to Affected Populations in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle; and its Best Practice Guide on Inter Agency Community Based Complaints Mechanisms. In addition, the CDAC Network website provides tools, checklists and guidelines as well as a message library);

- defining ToR for communities of practice and collective mechanisms (e.g. the Philippines);

| Key elements: Collective communication and community engagement | | |
|---|---|---|
| A common and coordinated approach to communication and community engagement, so that affected communities are provided with timely, relevant and actionable information through the most relevant communication channel. | Use of the most respectful and appropriate approaches to listen to communities' needs, feedback and complaints, ensuring they can actively participate and guide humanitarian action. | Ensuring that humanitarian actions and decision-making processes are informed by constructive engagement with affected communities throughout the humanitarian response cycle. |

Figure 1: Key elements: Collective communication and community engagement

should consist of the elements outlined in Figure 1, below. Successful approaches to multi-stakeholder collaboration demonstrate that it is feasible to bring together diverse stakeholders for communication and community engagement purposes.

While there are many examples of promising practices noted throughout this paper, these are not necessarily examples of best practice, with each example also having "missing" elements that are covered further below on lessons identified from collective approaches.

Some of the achievements of the multi-stakeholder collaborations include:

- preparedness activities (e.g. in the Asia Pacific region and in South Sudan);

- inclusion of community engagement as an activity in HCT workplans and the HPC (e.g. Myanmar and South and East Africa region);

- the establishment of information providing and gathering hotlines (e.g. Iraq, Burundi);

- using standard formats to gather feedback from affected populations in a variety of ways (e.g. the Philippines);

- ensuring broad outreach by creating mobile mechanisms for exchanging the views of affected populations (e.g. Burundi, Rwanda and Liberia); and

- a community engagement network for the Asia and Pacific region which has more than 100 members from 70 organisations, exchanging lessons and information.

- The IASC has mapped inter-agency information and feedback mechanisms and call centres.[17] The mapping also highlights relevant guidance on how to integrate AAP in the HPC.

[17] See https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/mapping_of_key_aap_initiatives_15_september_2016_0.pdf
[18] http://cfp.org.np/

> " *It is vital that aid agencies recognise that technology continues to change rapidly and that developing global tools for today's disasters may mean that agencies are not prepared for tomorrow* "



Syrian refugees, Lesbos, Greece

# 9. The critical role of technology

Inclusive information and communications technology has a potentially transformative role in enabling communication with and between affected populations in disasters and will play a critical role in future collective approaches. Mobile messaging apps, the fastest-growing digital communications phenomenon, are used by 2.5 billion people.[19] Currently, 95% of the world's population live within range of a mobile phone mast.[20] On December 2016 there 3.7 billion internet users across the globe, with Asia accounting for half of all users.[21]

There remain, however, many communities where more traditional channels of communication are relied upon including radio, television and face-to-face. To ensure that humanitarian organisations are able to use digital communications to meet the needs of those affected by disaster, they need to improve their understanding of ICT use and access, risks, cultural considerations and opportunities in any given context.

A lack of understanding is often compounded by the lack of common standards for the use of information and communications technology, leading to protection and accountability concerns.

> Linking with private sector bodies is essential to ensuring that technological options can be leveraged. This can include forming relationships and partnerships with service providers as well as with technology expertise (in the form of individuals or organisations).

- In response to Cyclone Pam (Vanuatu) and the Nepal earthquake in 2015 a common service approach was piloted through technical working groups to provide services for coordinated information provision and the collation and aggregation of community feedback to improve response-wide accountability.[18] This approach was replicated when OCHA deployed a Community Engagement Specialist to support the HCT in Yemen.

Increasingly, donors are seeking commitments from partners to ensure that communication and community engagement is systematically included in requests for funding. The UK's Department for International Development (DFID) Disasters and Emergencies Preparedness Programme (DEPP) has funded a number of such initiatives, aiming at strengthening local and national organisational capacity for decision making and leadership in humanitarian response.

This work has to be carefully coordinated to ensure companies' roles in responses are maximised and not hindered, though. It is also important not to overwhelm operators who will be contacted by many agencies in responses with various requests. There are opportunities for collaboration to occur at global level, but it is absolutely imperative that it happens at the local level.

The starting point for any technological solution needs to be an analysis of the means of communication that communities are familiar and comfortable with.

It is vital that aid agencies recognise that technology continues to change rapidly and that developing global tools for today's disasters may mean that agencies are not prepared for tomorrow. Equally important is the need for humanitarian organisations to ensure that the use of technology in communication and community engagement is inclusive, supportive of local economies and does not perpetuate existing divisions – or create new ones.

[19] *ICRC*, The Engine Room and Block Party – "Humanitarian Futures for Messaging Apps" 2017
[20] *Discussions with stakeholders.*
[21] *http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm*

iStock/Joel Carillet

# 10. Benefits and barriers

A review of key literature[22] combined with interviews has identified benefits and challenges to increased collective approaches and systematic development of shared platforms, services and teams.

**Benefits to collective approaches**
Clear benefits to collective models of collaborative action are emerging both for the affected people and the sector, ranging from the potential for collective development and standardisation of tools to improved coordination and efficiencies. More specifically, collective approaches:

- Contribute to greater understanding of trends and issues due to increased data collection and analysis outreach;
- Have the potential to reduce confusion, tensions and conflict with and between communities through consistency of messaging;
- Enable more consistent and stronger advocacy messaging as a result of collective community and humanitarian voices;

**Barriers to collective action**
There is an identified need for continued efforts to address a number of critical challenges to collective approaches which largely relate to: difficulty in convincing people to engage in a platform when the value of collaborating is not always clear; difficulty in ensuring consistent support from humanitarian leadership; individual agency desire for ownership; insufficient commitment at the operational level leading to lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities; the voluntary nature of member participation in platforms; collaboration being resource intensive, both in terms of time and cost; and lack of coordination, preparedness, prepositioned tools and stocks.

**Coupled with this:**
- Agencies continue to focus more on the response (the 'what') than community engagement (the 'how').
- There is a lack of willingness to share feedback data, for protection or other concerns, leading to lack of available aggregated data to inform programming. Where data

> **❝** *There is limited knowledge of how shared responsibility in collective approaches works in practice and how different organisations hold each other to account and who takes responsibility when things go wrong* **❞**

- Have the potential to shield affected communities from being overburdened and over-questioned;
- Improve cost-effectiveness due to shared use of resources;
- Include and value diverse views and greater expertise in response analysis and implementation design through the inclusion of media development, technology and private sector capability and know-how;
- Increase the likelihood of consistency of language and cultural interpretation;
- Broaden ownership;
- Enhance the likelihood of more innovative and appropriate tools being created.

Whilst there is agreement that collective action and collaborative approaches make better use of partners' resources, improve coordination and build local capacity, they are rarely systematically implemented through existing humanitarian coordination structures. Ad hoc attempts at accessing funding and defining strategies post-disaster have frequently resulted in a lack of collective accountability and poor coordination, leaving gaps and creating duplication.

is available, there is limited donor flexibility to allow for programme change based on feedback.
- Engaging the right people throughout the process is challenging as organisations often task those who are responsible for public communications to be responsible for communicating with communities rather than those who are directly involved with programming.
- There is limited knowledge of how shared responsibility in collective approaches works in practice and how different organisations hold each other to account and who takes responsibility when things go wrong.
- Achieving inter-sector focus remains difficult with some clusters/sectors adopting their own approaches, resulting in each sector then asking the same communities different (or even similar) questions about responses. There is a lack of cross-sector/cluster harmonisation of messaging and approaches.
- In situations of violence and armed conflict there are often political sensitivities coupled with a lack of predictability regarding humanitarian access which hinders individual and collective approaches to communication and community engagement. This is compounded by the often-

present mistrust of international actors and/or those from outside of the affected communities.

- Competition for funds remains an issue and lack of funding sustainability for smaller crises.

Furthermore, the use of different terminology creates misunderstanding and confusion within and between agencies and with affected populations. Key phrases used are accountability to affected populations (AAP); communicating with communities (CwC); community engagement and accountability (CEA); and communication and community engagement. This points to the need for more consistent language to ensure the engagement of diverse entities.

[22] Please see Annex 1 for bibliography.

---

### Box 2: Recommendations on preparedness from 2016 OCHA Asia Pacific Workshop on Community Engagement

Detailed recommendations from the workshop:

- Support the Inter-Agency Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) to initiate/support the RC/HC in organising an annual national workshop to review ongoing accountability/community engagement practices including looking at gaps and opportunities at the collective level. Advanced actions may include sub-national workshops.

- If one does not exist, discuss the appropriateness of establishing field level working group/s or an (informal/formal) network on community engagement at national level which would be directly linked to the ICCG or similar coordination mechanism. Assess the need to support the ICCG with common services through this. Discuss what those tools and services would be.

- Develop 4Ws matrix on accountability/community engagement activities with input from each of the clusters. Focus on activities which have an impact beyond a specific project/programme and are of concern to other organizations and need to be coordinated, as well as good practice worth sharing for replication. Consider supporting/linking to other mapping exercises on CBO/CSOs and local private sector (as complementary modalities).

- Seek agreement that in response, the ICCG will regularly review aggregate results coming through complaints and feedback mechanisms to identify the key issues and concerns and report to the HC/HCT. Collectively define solutions and track progress on addressing them. Identify which mechanisms will be used to draw feedback data from.

- Advocate and provide technical support on communication and community engagement to the RC/HC, HCT and other senior leadership group.

- Identify and support a 'champion organisation' to ensure the HC and HCT are held to account on commitments made.

- Identify the most appropriate communication channels for communities, taking into account the preferences of specific groups.

- Explore the opportunity for establishing an inter-agency joint feedback and complaints mechanism using lessons learned from other contexts, including the Global Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on Inter-agency complaints mechanism on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) for example.

- Collectively work towards a country level Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on collective community engagement. This could include points on roles and responsibilities, minimum commitments by agency, cluster or collective, common data management standards, etc.

- Support the roll-out of training to raise awareness and capacity on what community engagement means how to concretely operationalise it. This can be accompanied by a contextualized Toolkit: FAQ, ToRs, job descriptions, templates and messages on common services approaches for wide dissemination.

- A key part of preparedness actions is to build in approaches to ensure that local language and cultural interpretation are included.

- Based on contextual analysis of known (cyclical/seasonal) disasters and potential disasters, a part of country level preparedness should include the identification of a minimum set of tools, services, skills, capacities and resources (and where to access these) that will be needed. This will allow for quick access to relevant templates and resources when a disaster occurs.

*OCHA, Community Engagement in Humanitarian Action – Experiences from Asia – Workshop Report, Bangkok, October 2016*

# 11. Lessons learned from previous responses

Different examples of good practice and lessons learned from multi-agency initiatives have been identified in relation to collective approaches to communication and community engagement, including: the establishment of collective platforms in a range of contexts; the establishment of preparedness activities; development of guidance; and use of standard formats and templates for gathering feedback. See also Annex 3, which provides concrete examples of good practice in multi-stakeholder collective platforms at country level.

## 11.1 Preparedness and contextual diversity

Lessons learned from previous responses highlight that collective approaches to community engagement can be more effective than traditional agency or sector specific approaches. As can be seen from the 2016 response to Hurricane Mathew in Haiti however, systematic inclusion of lessons learned from previous responses is not yet automatic within the humanitarian community, meaning that organisations have to try and integrate or establish approaches at the beginning of a response.[24] Two key lessons learned to date centre on the criticality of preparedness activities and contextual diversity.

> *Integration is key:*
> *Communication and community engagement should not be a stand-alone activity but must be integrated in response mechanisms, with the feedback from populations feeding into existing coordination and decision making mechanisms*

Setting up a communication and community engagement approach cannot be done from scratch in the middle of an emergency. Increased investment in preparedness planning is paramount and should involve advocacy, close collaboration with local and development partners and fundraising for these activities. Such an approach is most effective when it builds on practices which already existed before the emergency.

For example in the 2015 Nepal earthquake response, the Communication with Communities working group was developed out of an existing communication platform part of the Nepal Risk Reduction Consortium. Supported by the Disasters and Emergencies Preparedness Programme (DEPP) a multi-stakeholder platform model has been rolled out in Bangladesh and South Sudan to develop and implement



IOM Philippines R/CAA

context-specific multi-year action plans to build preparedness capacity in two-way communication.

Similarly, the Philippines Community of Practice on Community Engagement forms a collective partnership around communication, accountability, community participation and common services.

> *Dedicated resources:*
> *Where financial and human resources have been specifically dedicated to communication and community engagement it is more effective than when it is added onto existing staff responsibilities*

In Asia-Pacific, OCHA's Rapid Response Approach to Disasters (RAPID) approach places emphasis on pre-disaster planning and preparedness focusing on understanding risk, vulnerability and humanitarian need prior to a disaster. Communities are engaged through commonly agreed methodologies prior to a crisis ensuring that engagement during a response is systematic as opposed to reactive. See Box 3, for specific recommendations on preparedness in relation to community engagement in humanitarian action arising from OCHA's Asia Pacific Workshop on Community Engagement in October 2016.

[24] Hofmann, Charles-Antoine., - Mission report - Communication and Community Engagement in Haiti: Where are the lessons from the 2010 Earthquake? November 2016

## Box 3: Recommendations on collective approaches from Yemen

A 2016 Policy Brief by the Yemen Community Engagement Working Group put forward the following recommendations in relation to its collective approaches to communication and community engagement:

1. The Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) to ensure the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) meetings have a standing agenda item dedicated to community feedback, including regularly requesting updates from the ICCM on the coordination of critical engagement activities (particularly important where there is risk of duplication with various call centres and remote monitoring projects for example).

2. The Inter-cluster Coordination Mechanism (ICCM) endorses and overseas the cross-cluster Community Engagement Technical Working Group (CE-WG) supporting a Common Service Mechanism (CSM) for coordinated community engagement. This should include a limited funding proposal for additional (and common) coordination, information management and data analysis capacity.

3. Clusters, Assessment Information Management Working Group (AIM-WG) and the CE-WG undertake and coordinate regular information needs and communication preferences, and communications infrastructure assessments to inform programming and community outreach.

4. OCHA to appoint a staff member in a secretariat role to support the CSM at ICCM level – ensuring CE-WG meetings and agreements are followed in a timely manner, and the CE-WG is delivering on the CSM project plan and reported targets.

*Source: Yemen Community Engagement Working Group (August 2016)*



Internews South Sudan

**Training journalists**

## 11.2 Two-way communication and language

Too many approaches tend to favour the emission of information. Listening to the perspectives and concerns of the population, engaging in dialogue and developing trust between aid providers and the population is just as important. More effort must be made to ensure that language and dialect are appropriate. Funding is needed to ensure that messages can be easily understood by those in crisis and to ensure that there is no bias in relation favouring more easily understandable messages as they come back into the system.

While communication technologies (SMS, radios, TV) are good communication channels, they should not replace "people-oriented" approaches with face-to-face communication and proximity with the populations.

Empowering affected people through enabling their access to life-saving information is essential for affected people to make informed decisions and gain control over their lives.

Libraries providing relevant material have been established linked to thematic issues and specific emergencies (e.g. the Zika and Ebola virus outbreaks), and at national levels covering a range of hazards (e.g. Bangladesh and South Sudan). These libraries allow for materials to be further developed, translated in local languages and adapted to other contexts.

> " *Funding is needed to ensure that messages can be easily understood by those in crisis and to ensure that there is no bias in relation to favouring more easily understandable messages as they come back into the system* "

[25] http://www.zikacommunicationnetwork.org/latest-materials
[26] https://ebolacommunicationnetwork.org

## Box 4: Collective ways of working in a public health crisis: the case of Zika Virus

Learning from the Ebola crisis, the international response to Zika saw a number of good practices in collective approaches to Zika Virus Prevention and Control in relation to Communication and Community Engagement. Shortly after the WHO announcement of a Zika Virus Public Health Emergency of International Concern in February 2016, WHO, UNICEF, IFRC and the Pan American Health Organisation, together with partners, issued common guidance.

The Guidance, titled "Risk Communication and Community Engagement for Zika Virus Prevention and Control: A Guidance and Resource Package for Country Offices for Coordination, Planning, Key Messages and Actions", March 2016. This supported collective action around the Global Strategic Response Framework (SRF) in areas of work around: Surveillance; Response; and, Research in relation to four categories of countries.

The Zika Communication Network (ZCN) is another good practice example of a collaborative effort of implementing partners. Its specially designed and dedicated website was widely marketed and used as "your reliable one-stop shop for Zika prevention and preparedness materials". The Network was facilitated by the Knowledge for Health (K4Health) Project and the Health Communication Capacity Collaborative (HC3) which are based at the Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs (CCP).

## 11.3 Communication channels and feedback

Collective approaches are most effective when multiple communication channels are used. Decisions on appropriate channels must be based on an analysis of affected populations' existing means of communication and communication needs. Humanitarian actors must understand a society's communication eco-system before a crisis. This has been addressed to some extent through the development of Communication and Media Landscape Guides, for example, in South Sudan

Information provided by communities before and during a crisis needs to be central to response analysis. "Closing the feedback loop", i.e. communicating back to affected people, continues to be a weak point in agencies' approaches. However, there are good practice examples from the Haiyan response in the Philippines to be drawn upon.

Where a number of agencies are operational, communities find joint or inter-agency feedback mechanisms less confusing. If common feedback mechanisms are not considered appropriate, at a minimum, joint standards for feedback should be established.

> " *Collective approaches are most effective when multiple communication channels are used* "



**Audience questions on preparedness**

BBC Media Action

**Box 5: Recommendations from UNHCR's operation in Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on interagency feedback mechanisms**

In response to the European Refugee and Migrant crisis, an inter-agency feedback mechanism was established in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (fYR Macedonia) using face-to-face communication and mobile data collection tools. Agreement was reached between agencies on roles and responsibilities including overall responsibility for analyzing and sharing the data. Recommendations from UNHCR's operation there demonstrate how effective feedback mechanisms can be used as a tool to inform and shape humanitarian response.

They identified **10 steps** to setting up an effective interagency feedback mechanism:

1. **Define the Challenge:** Consult with communities and humanitarian responders to work out what barriers are preventing feedback being listened to and acted on. This homework stage is essential.
2. **Don't duplicate efforts:** Build on existing staff capacities and work with established services to ensure sustainability.
3. **Use the community's preferred communication channels:** Engage with them through channels they like and trust.
4. **Coordinate:** Have clear commitment and agreement on roles and responsibilities, both internally and inter-agency.
5. **Focus on what you need to know to make improvements:** Design your mechanism to collect structured data that enables you to make decisions and take action at the right time.
6. **Prepare for sensitive issues:** Ensure you have the resources and appropriate channels to create a safe and confidential space for reporting.
7. **Test and refine:** Speak to those using the mechanism and iterate your design to ensure effectiveness.
8. **Enable evolution:** Adapt your mechanism to the changing dynamics of the response - go back to the drawing board if necessary.
9. **Make data digestible:** Visualise your data, show trends and find the right forum(s) for sharing to make it accessible.
10. **Demonstrate you've listened:** Proactively explain the changes you've made and why certain actions sometimes cannot be taken.

## 11.4 Local leadership, local action

The central role of the government at all levels must be recognised, as it holds primary responsibility for its population. An evaluation of the approach in Nepal found that most people interviewed were looking first and foremost to the Nepali government for information, and to support them, especially in the longer term with housing and rebuilding their livelihoods. It is imperative that government capacity is realistically acknowledged, reinforced and supported.

The need for senior leadership buy-in is essential for strengthening aid providers' capacity to integrate feedback into responses and avoid making communication and engagement with affected communities a stand-alone niche. It is equally essential for maintaining organisational engagement in a collective platform beyond the interest of individual champions.

Multi-level communication and community engagement approaches needs to take place at national, district and community levels and needs to build on local capacities and existing channels of communication when appropriate through all phases of the response.

## 11.5 Systematic participation and partnerships

Ensuring collective and systematic participation of affected communities in shaping aid priorities and programme design to ensure that the assistance is accountable, relevant and adapted to needs is necessary. Participatory needs assessments and monitoring and evaluation are an important means to this end.

In some places, robust community participation and engagement approaches have been seen to lessen the risk of security incidents and mitigate political interference in humanitarian responses.

Identifying, building and strengthening sustainable partnerships is vital and could involve "Humanitarian to Humanitarian Services", data companies, private sector enterprises and telecommunications companies.

*" The already-established relationships that national and international NGOs have with communities pre-disaster and linking in with these is important in order to avoid duplication, confusion and to build from existing foundations "*

# 12. Towards a sustainable collective service

The CDAC Network review outlines the potential goals and functions of a collective service. With an overarching goal of *improving the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian response by systematically engaging communities,* the service could have the following strategic aims, features and functions:

**National Level Mechanism**
- To ensure that affected communities are provided with timely, relevant and actionable life-saving and life-enhancing information in preparedness for and in the event of a disaster;
- To ensure that humanitarian actions are informed by constructive participation of communities throughout the humanitarian programme cycle, including regular feedback solicited from communities on key aspects of humanitarian performance to the strategic decision-making level;
- To use the most appropriate approaches to listen to communities' needs, feedback and complaints including sensitive ones;
- To ensure that the collective service augments local capacities so that national responders are better prepared in future responses; and
- To ensure that humanitarian responders are held to account by affected people through visible and predictable means.

The following key pre-conditions and features of a national level collective mechanism were elicited from a review of research and feedback from interviews with key informants:

**Links to existing structures:** The mechanism needs to be linked to existing humanitarian architecture and coordination structures as part of preparedness measures, such as, the National Disasters Management Authority. There are different options for where the mechanism should be placed in the event of an international response:

- If the Cluster System is activated, the collective mechanism should sit at the inter-cluster level.
- A Communication and Community Engagement Coordinator position is created to lead a cross-sector Technical Working Group (TWG) in support of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and Inter-Cluster Coordination (ICC) on a needs basis. With a clear terms of reference (ToR), the TWG would seek

to bring together actors working in communication and community engagement and provide technical guidance to clusters, agency partners, and Government, where feasible. This is an inclusive approach that ensures those who would not normally engage through clusters actively participate in coordination.

**Terms of Reference:** Collective mechanisms should develop clear ToR to ensure that roles, responsibilities and objectives are clear to all stakeholders.

**Tool flexibility:** Tools developed at a global level should remain sufficiently flexible for contextual adaptation. Good practice examples are required of how these tools have been used to better support country programmes.

**Diverse skills and capacities:** There is no one set of skills applicable for all contexts. Different disasters will call for different skill sets and capacities and these will need to be adequately reflected and involved in collective services.

**Adjusting to the evolving response:** Moving from preparedness to response mode will require adapting the specific objectives and activities to the evolving context. This should be acknowledged in the mechanism's ToR and endorsed by its members.

**Activation:** In non-HCT or cluster situations, the collective mechanism should be activated by the national mechanism on communication and community engagement. When clusters are activated, the collective mechanism should be activated by the Resident Coordinator or Humanitarian Coordinator, and the HCT.

**Leadership:** While overall leadership of the collective mechanism should come from the Humanitarian/Resident Coordinator/HCT, the mechanism can be established by any humanitarian organisation depending on the emergency, context and capacity. Leadership roles should be pre-agreed as part of operational readiness.

**Minimum and potential activities:** At national level, a key role of the mechanism should be the accountability that it provides to ensure that communication and community engagement is an integral part of the overall humanitarian response. Activities will differ depending on context. A collective national mechanism should however, at minimum be able to: Undertake preparedness actions;

coordinate information for people affected; collect or facilitate the collection and analysis of a breadth of data and provide clear information on trends which operational agencies can use to inform their programming. Areas of action are likely to include:

- Two-way communication: listening and ensuring communities have access to the information they need to make decisions about their lives.
- Feedback: Consolidated feedback data and dialogue, linking individual organizations/clusters feedback mechanisms when they exist, to inform response-wide decision making. This links to the broader accountability agenda.
- Regular and broad information sharing so that even those which have not been directly involved in the mechanism can still benefit.

The mechanism should facilitate joint outreach to avoid communities being repeatedly surveyed.

Collective or individual activities: The national mechanism in collaboration with the HCT needs to agree on which activities are part of individual agency responsibility or mandate and which would most benefit from being addressed collectively.

**Representation:** Operational agencies should be represented in the mechanism as well as government bodies, UN bodies, the Red Cross Movement, civil society organisations and private sector bodies, as appropriate to the context.

**Systematisation:** In situations where there is a Humanitarian/Resident Coordinator, HCT and/or Inter-Cluster Coordination Group, communication and community engagement should be a standing item on meeting agendas.

**Funding:** In the short term, the global level mechanism would require temporary seed funding for set-up, needing dedicated human and financial resources; in the medium-term there would be a need for the reallocation of funding within existing operational funding streams.

Securing this funding would require evidence of effectiveness and advocacy. In the longer term, to ensure that the mechanism is fully integrated into the humanitarian architecture, all funding for the mechanism would be sourced through reallocation from operations across the system.
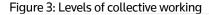
### Global Service

The global level objective would be to ensure more timely, predictable and coordinated approaches to communication and community engagement through system-level changes and the provision of the necessary technical support to country programmes.

The collective service at global level should link to existing and emerging humanitarian architecture, remaining flexible and agile enough to adapt over time. It is proposed that the key functions and features of the collective service will include:

- Undertaking complementary activities that will support the establishment or effectiveness of existing national and local collective mechanisms;
- Advocating for the benefits of collective and systematic communication and engagement with communities;
- Assessing whether communication and community engagement efforts in a response have been adequate and whether responses were adapted to the expressed needs of affected populations;
- Providing technical support to national collective mechanisms such as advice on appropriate options for what form country level collective mechanisms might take, and the provision of guidance, adaptable tools, templates and training to help build national and local capacity;
- Making accessible a minimum set of tools that can be used at national level and adapted as contextually appropriate; providing an overview of what each tool should be used for and, where relevant, how the tool links into existing communication and community engagement commitments and frameworks such as the CHS and the Grand Bargain;
- Maintaining standby capacity with trained specialists; and
- Documenting best practices, lessons learned and evidence from different initiatives, and ensuring these are appropriately shared from context to context.

Figure 3: Levels of collective working



Level and Degree of Collective Working

Low level collaboration

Integration

### Coordination

There is a lack of coordination in relation to two-way communication and engagement including referral, feedback, complaints and provision/collection of information.

An important role of the collective mechanism will be to provide guidance to stakeholders on the most appropriate processes to be adopted in advance of and during disasters.

Levels and degrees of collective working will need to be agreed on a context by context basis (and these may change over time). For example, the stakeholders within the mechanism may decide that low level collaboration is the most appropriate process to adopt through for example, adopting individual approaches to communication and community engagement but sharing information via the collective mechanism through to the joint implementation of fully integrated activities.

Key points to note:

- Building on the experience of the Shongjog Multi-Stakeholder Platform, country level communication and community engagement mechanisms should be able to convert into an inter-cluster working group if the cluster system is activated.

- A collective mechanism implies all agencies and stakeholders being engaged in one mechanism. It is important not to override the collective benefits of agencies working individually but with greater consistency; improve resourcing; and increased sharing of information.

- Operational agency direct links with affected communities are imperative to ensure the building up of relationships of trust and to allow for programme adjustments based on feedback where possible. The collective mechanism must act to support operational agencies, not replace them.

### Tools, Guidance and Services

There is a need for the collation of tools, new and existing, and services that the collective mechanism should provide, with these being adaptable at global and at national level.



BBC Media Action

**CDAC Network Earthquake Simulation Training Dhaka**

> " *It is important not to override the collective benefits of agencies working individually but with greater consistency* "

*" A stronger and more visible commitment from humanitarian response leadership is required "*

# 13. Conclusions and Recommendations

There is a broad agreement among those interviewed that a collective service for communication and community engagement is required at global level and at national and local levels. It needs to emphasise local action and local leadership, organically developed and built from there.

Some humanitarian organisations remain cautious about the balance between benefits and the risks, primarily in relation to protection, with concerns around ownership of information gathered from those affected by disaster; particularly in situations of conflict, violence and political instability. However, the need for methods to improve coordination (which does not necessarily imply joint implementation) and increased opportunities for skill-sharing are welcomed by all.

## Recommendation 1

**International humanitarian organisations should recognise and use existing local and national mechanisms for collective communication and community engagement mechanisms**.
The starting point for communication and community engagement is within the communities and countries impacted by, or vulnerable to, disaster. Existing mechanisms need to be supported pre-disaster to ensure that they can be used and strengthened during and following a disaster. The central role of the Government at all levels must be recognised, as it holds the primary responsibility for the protection of populations during disasters.

## Recommendation 2

**All humanitarian actors should understand and analyse local communications contexts and stakeholders to prepare for or pre-position context-specific platforms at the national level with support through a global service until fully integrated into the humanitarian architecture.**
In moving towards a model of collaborative efficiency through processes such as the Agenda for Humanity and the Grand Bargain, humanitarian leaders and policymakers urgently need to undertake changes to ensure collective efforts, both globally and at country level, provide systematic guidance for communication and community engagement. Collective approaches – at national and global levels – are required and should occur as a preparedness activity supported by necessary resource mobilisation.

## Recommendation 3

**All NGO, UN and Red Cross entities should integrate communication and community engagement throughout their organisational humanitarian programme cycle as well as in collaborative processes such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) and Emergency Response Preparedness (ERP) Plans.**
Communication and community engagement must be more effectively integrated into each stage of the programme cycle. At a minimum, it must be systematically included in assessments, communication and information materials and collective and individual planning and appeal documents. Decision-making processes should incorporate community feedback and planning/adjustment processes should be supported by inputs gathered from affected communities and highlighted to donors. The global service and national mechanisms should provide guidance on how to effectively achieve this.

A stronger and more visible commitment from humanitarian response leadership is required.

The IASC Emergency Director's Group Preliminary Guidance Note on Protection and Accountability to Affected Populations in the Humanitarian Cycle highlights several areas where there is potential for collective approaches and accountability to affected populations throughout the HPC. These actions need to be acted on and extended beyond the IASC Commitments and on Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) to include the broader aspects of communication and community engagement.

## Recommendation 4

**All humanitarian actors should promote, operationalise and strictly adhere to organisational and system-wide commitments and principles on quality and accountability.**
Organisations must promote, operationalise, monitor and report openly and honestly on their adherence to their respective frameworks, including the collective standards such as the CHS and IASC AAP.

All organisations involved in communication and community engagement need their senior leadership to be explicit about their commitments to this area of work and how these will be put into practice. This could for example include the drafting of policy documents linked to

operational strategies which contain measurable indicators to monitor performance and the need for change.

Staff members, including those at senior level and technical staff, should have communication and community engagement included in their job descriptions.

### Recommendation 5

**Donor agencies need to meet their commitment to improved communication and community engagement through increased and flexible humanitarian financing.**
Donors need to provide clear incentives and requirements for humanitarian partners to adhere to standards and commitments on communication and community engagement; and, to undertake relevant monitoring and programme adaptation. This involves increased funding flexibility to allow for programme changes based on feedback from disaster affected communities.

### Recommendation 6

**All humanitarian organisations should integrate collective actions on communication and community engagement into emergency preparedness.**
Specific collective actions should be part of an agency's operational readiness to ensure that when a disaster occurs, humanitarian actors have a common understanding of how best to engage with affected populations and have the requisite tools and agreed approaches in place to do so in a timely, effective manner. At a minimum this should include mapping the communications landscapes and engaging all relevant actors on preparedness planning so that roles and responsibilities can be defined. This must involve diverse groups including community members, media, telecommunications providers, local authorities and humanitarian agencies.

### Recommendation 7

**The CDAC Network should consolidate and disseminate good practice on communication and community engagement.**
The CDAC Network, in collaboration with the 'collective service' steering group should undertake a comprehensive review and consolidation of good practices. Agencies should commit to sharing relevant findings, collective analysis and reports based on feedback collection with affected populations.

### Recommendation 8

**Humanitarian organisations should include communications technologies and media actors in communication and community engagement fora both nationally and globally, including in key coordination or inter-agency initiatives in a response.**
Communications landscapes are complex. Models for communication and community engagement in disasters need to include all relevant actors if they are to be effective. They need to expand far beyond humanitarian organisations. Local telecommunications and internet providers, media actors, regulatory bodies and other relevant influencers need to be active in communication and community engagement fora both nationally and globally. The need for aid organisations to have a strong understanding of high and low technology communication channels, and their enabling environments, is critical.

" *Local telecommunications and internet providers, media actors, regulatory bodies and other relevant influencers need to be active in communication and community engagement, both nationally and globally* "

# Annex 1: Bibliography

1. BBC Media Action, Still left in the dark? How people in emergencies use communication to survive – and how humanitarian agencies can help. Policy Briefing #6, March 2012
2. Bonino, F., Jean, I., Knox Clarke, P., - Humanitarian Feedback Mechanisms – Research, evidence and guidance – ALNAP/ODI 2014
3. CDAC Network Report on Annual Members' Council 30 June – 1 July 2016
4. CDAC Network, Are You Listening Now? The challenge to humanitarian aid of communicating with people affected by disaster, Nepal, May 2016
5. CDAC Network, Common Service Workshop: Summary and Next Steps, October 2015
6. CDAC Network, Knowledge and Learning Event: Shongjog Multi-Stakeholder Platform for CWC – 1 June 2016, Bangladesh
7. CDAC Network: 2016-2021 – Leading communication with communities in crisis now and into the future
8. Communication and community engagement initiative – Towards system-wide collective accountability to affected people – Concept Note and Workplan 1 January 2017 – 31 December 2019
9. Concept Note: A Common Service Model for Effective Engagement with Affected Communities in Humanitarian Emergencies (CDAC-N members)
10. Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability
11. Global Public Policy Institute and Humanitarian Outcomes, Listening to communities in insecure environments – Lessons from community feedback mechanisms in Afghanistan, Somalia and Syria Briefing Note, October 2016
12. Hofmann, Charles-Antoine., - Mission report - Communication and Community Engagement in Haiti: *Where are the lessons from the 2010 Earthquake?* November 2016
13. Hugelius, K., Gifford, M., Ortenwall, P., Adolfsson, A., – Disaster Radio for Communication of Vital Messages and Health-Related Information: Experiences From the Haiyan Typhoon, the Philippines. Society for Disaster Medicine and Public Health, Inc., 2016
14. IASC, Accountability to affected populations: Mapping of current Initiatives, interagency projects and key reports – 2016
15. ICRC, The Engine Room and Block Party – "Humanitarian Futures for Messaging Apps" 2017
16. IFRC, Beneficiary Communication and Accountability – A responsibility not a choice – Lessons learned and recommendations – Indonesia, Haiti, Pakistan, 2011
17. Inter-Agency Standing Committee Emergency Disaster Group Preliminary Guidance Note – Protection and Accountability to Affected Populations in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, 2015
18. OCHA, Community Engagement in Humanitarian Action – Experiences from Asia – Workshop Report, Bangkok, October 2016
19. OCHA, Inter-Agency Common Feedback Project, Nepal Earthquake 2015
20. OCHA, Yemen - Common Service Feedback Mechanism – Improving system-wide accountability, December 2015
21. OCHA, Yemen – Common Service for Community Engagement Project Proposal
22. Operations Protocol: Minimum Preparedness and Response Actions of the CoP on Community Engagement, Version 1, August 2016
23. Philippines Community of Practice on Community Engagement ToR
24. SCHR, Informal brainstorming on what we would like to see come out of the Grand Bargain work stream on "Participation" (November 2016)
25. Sphere Project Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response, 2011
26. Strengthening Communication, Community Engagement and Social Mobilisation in Humanitarian Emergencies – Workshop Summary Note and Key Conclusions – 26 April 2016
27. The GroundTruth Project and the ETC, Proposal for a "common platform" for community engagement in humanitarian emergencies, September 2015
28. UNICEF, Ensuring quality programming and accountability to affected populations Phase II – Request for a funding cost extension, 28 November 2016

# Annex 2: Contributing organisations

In addition to CDAC Network on the ground research materials, the following organisations and agencies provided contributions to the drafting of this briefing paper through identifying representatives for interview and the provision of relevant documentation.

A number of UN Country Offices were interviewed as focal points for communication and community engagement in country, together with some leadership, including Humanitarian Coordinators, and operational staff in country.

## Contributing organisations

1. ACAPS
2. ALNAP
3. BBC Media Action
4. CDAC Network
5. CHS Alliance
6. DFID
7. First Response Radio
8. Global Protection Cluster
9. GroundTruth Solutions
10. IASC AAP/PSEA Task Team
11. ICRC
12. IFRC
13. IMS
14. Independent Consultant (member of NORCAP)
15. Internews
16. IOM Bangladesh
17. IOM Geneva
18. ITU
19. Plan International
20. SCHR
21. Translators without Borders
22. UN OCHA Myanmar
23. UN OCHA Iraq
24. UN OCHA Nepal
25. UN OCHA New York
26. UN OCHA Philippines
27. UN OCHA Regional Office for Asia and Pacific
28. UN OCHA Yemen
29. UNHCR Geneva
30. UNICEF Bangladesh
31. UNICEF Geneva
32. USAID/BPRM
33. WFP Rome
34. WHO Geneva
35. World Vision

# Annex 3: Good practice in multi-stakeholder Collective Platforms

Multi-Stakeholder Collective Platforms [27]

| Platform/group | Brief overview |
| --- | --- |
| **Haiti**<br><br>CDAC Haiti 2010 | • A multi-agency initiative focused on dialogue with affected groups.<br>• The focus was on information needs that Haitian citizens had identified themselves as important.<br>• Lack of involvement of civil society and national NGOs.<br>• Handing on of lessons learned (in relation to Hurricane Mathew in 2016) has not taken place. |
| **Asia Pacfic**<br><br>Regional Community Engagement Network, Asia and the Pacific Region 2012 | • Established by the OCHA Regional Office the group exchanges lessons and shares information.<br>• More than 100 practitioner group members from 70 organisations.<br>• No formal meeting schedule or membership criteria. |
| **Philippines**<br><br>Community of Practice (CoP) on Community Engagement: Communication, Accountability, Community Participation and Common Service partnerships 2014 | • Built on the foundations of a CoP established since 2012.<br>• The CoP provides strategic direction and technical support to existing field level Technical Working Groups (TWG) including improving two-way communication platforms, feedback avenues and closing the communication loop mechanisms.<br>• The CoP provides recommendations, updates and relevant reports to the HCT as required.<br>• Learning and knowledge sharing approach including strong partnership with the Philippines private sector.<br>• Developed a "Rapid Information, Communication and Accountability Assessment (RICAA)" Tool. |
| **Yemen**<br><br>Community Engagement Working Group/Common Service for Community Engagement 2015 | • A common service approach initiated by OCHA in order to make more efficient use of partners' resources, improve coordination and build local capacity.<br>• Focusing was on aggregating community feedback analysis to humanitarian leadership level. |

[27] *This table highlights only some examples of good practice where collective approaches to Communication and Community Engagement have been adopted from a range of different contexts.*

## Annex 3: Good practice in multi-stakeholder Collective Platforms, contd.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Bangladesh**<br><br>Shongjog Multi-Stakeholder Platform for CWC<br><br>Established in November 2015 [28] | • Government and national and INGO compostition.<br>• Agreed terms of reference (ToR) and endorsed and chaired by Government.<br>• Financial support from DFID funded CDAC-DEPP project, including a Flexible Funding Mechanism for locally-identified priorities.<br>• Intensive facilitation required from the BBC Media Action and DEPP staff.<br>• Learning and reflection approach adopted to try and improve platform functioning.<br>• Sits outside the Cluster System and has continuous engagement of members.<br>• Established operational procedures for response and dedicated website.<br>• Capacity building in communicating with communities led by BBC Media Action with locally contextualised tools.<br>• A community radio guideline for use during emergencies led by the Bangladesh Red Crescent.<br>• A Best Practices Study led by BRAC.<br>• A guide for emergency volunteers led by BRAC and the Bangladesh Red Crescent.<br>• There is an additional working group focusing on public health issues which holds regular discussions with the Shongjog Platform without being a part of it.<br>• A nationally focused and driven advocacy project including joint action planning with the government. |
| **Nepal**<br><br>Community Engagement Working Group (CEWG) 2015<br>and Common Feedback Project | • Formed immediately after the 2015 earthquake under the leadership of UNICEF.<br>• Cross-sector coordination and technical support service at including involvement of UN agencies, I/NGOs, private sector bodies including media and telecommunications companies, local and national level government bodies.<br>• Collects data randomly not just from aid recipients.<br>• Coordination support provided by the UN RC's office and remote technical support from OCHA's Regional Office for Asia and Pacific.<br>• Incorporated into the HCT's ERP for Nepal and called together on an as-needed basis.<br>• Coordination support provided by the UN RC's office and remote technical support from OCHA's Regional Office for Asia and Pacific.<br>• Incorporated into the HCT's ERP for Nepal and called together on an as-needed basis. |
| **Nepal**<br><br>Inter-Agency Common Feedback Project 2015 | • Sits under the CWEG.<br>• A common service platform for collecting, aggregating, disseminating and advocating for community feedback collected from affected areas.<br>• The project's purpose is to ensure that the provision of information, community feedback and community participation are effectively implemented and coordinated at the system level.<br>• Hosted by the RC's office working on behalf of all stakeholders. Sitting within the RCO allows access and advocacy possibilities at senior leadership levels including with the HCT, inter-cluster coordination mechanisms and other coordination fora. |

[28] *Shongjog was built following the establishment of a Working Group for Communication with Communities in Emergencies, which was an informal structure.*

## Annex 3: Good practice in multi-stakeholder Collective Platforms, contd.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Iraq**<br><br>Iraq Internally Displaced Persons Information Centre 2015 | ● Endorsed by the HCT in 2014 and initally funded by UNCHR, WFP and OCHA, the call centre was launched in July 2015.<br><br>● Provides information on available humanitarian assistance and receives complaints and feedback from displaced families on the humanitarian response.<br>● Aims to identify gaps in humanitarian assistance and improve the way information is shared.<br>● A key element of good practice has been the coming together of agencies to develop tools. |
| **Switzerland**<br><br>IASC Task Team on Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (AAP/PSEA) | ● Created by the IASC in January 2014 following the merger of two previous task forces.<br>● Aims to foster a culture of accountability and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at all levels of the humanitarian system.<br>● Aims to foster a culture of accountability and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at all levels of the humanitarian system.<br>● Encourages institutionalization of AAP and PSEA within humanitarian organizations, including local and national NGOs, INGOs, Red Cross Red Crescent movement and UN Agencies.<br>● Supports operationalization of AAP and PSEA at collective level as well as individual agency level.<br>● Participation is open to all interested humanitarian organisations, especially operational agencies. The task team brings together NGOs, UN, IOM, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, and other national and international organisations on an equal footing. Participants may also be non-IASC or development actors. |
| **South Sudan**<br><br>Communicating with communities working group | ● A pilot message library on early warning, prevention and preparedness.<br>● A Media and Telecommunications Landscape Guide.<br>● Capacity building training on communicating with communities by BBC Media Action, engaging media and aid practitioners |
| **Kenya**<br><br>Inter-Agency Working Group, communicating with communities sub-group | ● IAWG and related sub-groups on accountability and communicating with communities<br>● Transparency International Initiative |

## Annex 3: Good practice in multi-stakeholder Collective Platforms, contd.

| Good practice examples of collective services, tools and guidance | |
|---|---|
| **Inclusion in HCT workplans and the HPC**<br><br>Myanmar<br><br>And South and East Africa region | Inclusion of community engagement into HCT workplans (as seen in Myanmar) to ensure that adequate community feedback and complaint response mechanisms are in place; that timely information is provided to affected communities; and that they can meaningfully participate in the decision-making processes throughout the HPC.<br><br>Without having a dedicated regional approach to systematized community engagement, OCHA's Regional Office for South and East Africa is working with colleagues in the RC's Offices in the region to integrate community engagement in HPCs. |
| **Hotlines**<br><br>Burundi | Collaboration of World Vision, the Red Cross, IOM, OCHA and others, the Burundi Humanitarian Hotline was established in response to an absence of information on the humanitarian situation during the 2015 civil unrest. |
| **Advocacy**<br><br>South and Eastern Africa Region | In July 2016 OCHA published its first Community Engagement and Humanitarian Partnerships newsletter compiling examples of innovative policy, practice and partnerships with the aim of creating increased awareness and facilitating the sharing of good practice. |
| **Guidance**<br><br>Global | The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Emergency Disaster Group Preliminary Guidance Note – Protection and Accountability to Affected Populations in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle has been developed to provide practical guidance to Humanitarian Coordinators and Humanitarian Country Teams, to ensure that accountability to affected populations (AAP) and protection are embedded throughout the HPC. |
| **Complaints mechanisms**<br><br>Global | Best Practice Guide Inter Agency Community Based Complaint Mechanisms - operational guidance on how to set up and run an inter-agency community-based complaint mechanism to handle reports of sexual abuse and exploitation by aid workers. It compiles lessons learned, examples, and case studies. |
| **Tools**<br><br>Global | The CDAC Network website provides tools, checklists and guidelines on various topics. The tools have been developed by the CDAC Network and its members and cover topics such as assessing information and communication needs; developing communication strategies; community profiling; and communicating more effectively with crisis-affected communities. A wide range of tools and resources were also developed under the DEPP that can be found on www.cdacnetwork.org. |
| **Messaging**<br><br>Global | CDAC Network's Message Library provides generic messages on pertinent issues which can be adapted to context. Specific national level libraries are also available, for example, Bangladesh and South Sudan. |
| **Terms of reference (ToR)**<br><br>National | Various national platforms have established ToRs which set out the objectives of the group; its composition; frequency and type of meetings; core functions and deliverables; details on its coordination, technical support and advocacy roles. |

| Feedback mechanisms<br><br>Philippines | The post-Haiyan Community Response Map allowed for multiple agencies to use standard formats to gather feedback from affected populations in a variety of ways (SMS, face-to-face, telephone). Information collected was collated and added to the Community Response Map, tagged by date or topic and then available for us in order to adapt programming. The mapping allowed for showing of trends and visualization of data over time, by geographic region and by gender. |
|---|---|
| Mobile mechanisms for exchanging the views of affected populations<br><br>Burundi, Rwanda and Liberia | The IFRC and the Red Cross Societies of Burundi and Rwanda have established a mobile cinema and radio programme to improve health, resilience and communication with vulnerable communities. Live radio programmes and touring mobile cinemas provide vital information to communities on how to prevent diseases like malaria and cholera, and how to prepare for disasters. The activities also encourage feedback and participation from communities, giving valuable insight into the challenges people face and how the Red Cross can better help them.<br><br>A similar radio-only approach called "Radio in a Box" has been adopted in Liberia. Members of the Liberian Red Cross beneficiary communications team drive to rural areas to allow remote communities to participate in live-broadcast radio programming which also provides life-saving information. |
| Lesson exchanges<br><br>Asia Pacific | Since 2012 the OCHA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific has enabled humanitarian partners to come together, often virtually, to exchange lessons and share information. This informal Community Engagement Network consists of over 100 practitioners from 70 organisations. |

# Annex 4: Potential Global Service and National Mechanism activities

| Global level[29] | National (and/or regional) level[30] |
|---|---|
| **Preparedness** | |
| At global level, advocate for and raise awareness of the benefits of collective and systematic communication and engagement with affected communities. | 4W mapping of who is doing what, when and where in relation to communication and community engagement both in advance of, during and throughout a humanitarian response. |
| Provide timely and predictable technical expertise and advice on appropriate tools and methodologies on an ongoing basis but also as requested to support country/regional level preparedness and response activities. | Work with government and other stakeholders to research and understand the communications environment in order to ensure engagement with communities is based on a sound understanding of ways different communities within the response share, access and evaluate information. |
| Establish a common set of minimum tools which can be adapted as required at national/regional level. | Develop and agree on common messages, over and above the cluster key messages, as part of collective communication strategy for information dissemination (in a cluster system, this will be done through the inter-cluster mechanism). |
| Gather, collate and disseminate examples of good practice and learning from national level collective communication and community engagement from around the globe. | Support media content development (and training/awareness raising?) and local broadcasters, as well as community level mobilisation. |
| Consolidate existing guidance, manuals and policies to avoid country level teams having to read through numerous different versions. | Advise inter-cluster group, agencies/clusters on most appropriate activities and channels (from mass to community-based to interpersonal) to be used for communication with communities. |
| Clarify roles and responsibilities for different emergency contexts into existing guidelines, protocols and training. | Establish appropriate inter-agency common feedback mechanisms (e.g. hotlines), whereby feedback or complaints received are referred to concerned organisations or clusters and corrective actions monitored. For example, through multi-channels, such as regular micro-surveys on key indicators of affected people's feedback and/or perceptions, as well as in-depth, rapid qualitative assessments, with analysis of trends and recommendations and closing of the loop. |

[29] These activities must be undertaken in close coordination and collaboration with other global level activities and initiatives.

[30] Annex 1 of the Strengthening Communication, Community Engagement and Social Mobilisation in Humanitarian Emergencies – Workshop Summary Note and Key Conclusions – 26 April 2016 provides a number of recommendations to for action at country level. These are not all listed here but should be taken into account at country level.

## Annex 4: Potential Global Service and National Mechanism activities, contd.

| | |
|---|---|
| Provide technical support and advice on capacity building either through remote support or from a roster mechanism. | Establish strategic partnerships at national/regional level in order to assure the availability of relevant goods and services if/when an emergency response is implemented. |
| Advocate for systematic inclusion of collaborative communication and community engagement across and within the Global Clusters. | Mapping of stocks of relevant pre-positioned and available commodities to support communication and community engagement (e.g. radios), including analysis of where these can be sourced rapidly in case of emergency. |
| Design of training and simulation materials for adaptation at country level. | Provide tools and technical support to humanitarian actors, including the government and local NGOs, where required, to improve their capacity to exchange information and act upon feedback received from those affected. |
| Development of tools for tracking and monitoring activities that agencies are doing themselves, similar to the CaLP Cash Atlas. | With communication and community engagement already being fundamental aspects of cluster work, advocate for increased inclusion of collaborative communication and community engagement across and within all clusters/sectors. |
| Provide advice on potential options for sustainability of national level mechanisms. This is likely to include the establishment of training and capacity-building activities at local level and may include signposting towards distance learning and providing advice on linkages to academic institutions and specialist bodies which are able to provide relevant training and capacity building. | Build the collective mechanism in advance of disaster as part of preparedness activities.<br><br>Provide training for international staff on local communication culture and ensure media landscape guides up to date. |
| Development of templates such as agreements with providers of goods and services which can be modified per context [31]. | Capacity building and training and managing of simulations. |
| Provide guidance to national level collective mechanisms on preparedness activities that can be put in place in relation to communication and community engagement. | Share good practice from national and local mechanisms across regions |
| Further development of a roster of experts both for surge deployments as well as deployments that support country level mechanisms establish preparedness activities outset times of emergency. | Apply for roster and be included as experts for deployment outside country in event of disaster |

[31] Some templates are already available e.g. through the CDAC Network messaging library.

## Annex 4: Potential Global Service and National Mechanism activities, contd.

| | |
|---|---|
| Liaison with international level service providers and bodies (e.g. telecommunications regulators) and working with for example, the International Telecommunication Union, to convene regulators to try and avoid having to negotiate every time there is a disaster. | Linking with national telecommunication service providers and liaise with Emergency Telecommunications Cluster as part of a response. |

| Response |
|---|

**At the Global Level:**
Provide timely and predictable technical expertise and advice on appropriate tools and methodologies on an ongoing basis but also as requested to support country/regional level preparedness and response activities.

**At the National and local level:**
➜ Integrate questions/secondary data review into coordinated assessments regarding the communication eco-system (including ICT access), preferred communication channels and social and behavioural barriers and enablers.

➜ Provide minimal common ICT services, notably charging and connectivity, via relevant partners.

➜ Coordination and harmonisation of information going to and coming from affected populations.

➜ Provide common tools and standards for the collection of data feedback, so to ensure that feedback collected by individual organisations or clusters can be aggregated and analysed efficiently.

➜ Aggregate feedback collected, together with humanitarian data such as the 4Ws to identify gaps in the overall response and necessary corrective actions. (eg: feedback could be integrated and visualized via the Humanitarian Data Exchange-HDX or a pre-agreed common data platform).

➜ Conduct community perception surveys of the response, track rumours and where relevant, monitor social media trends.

➜ Monitor major issues arising from feedback received by different organisations and/or clusters and direct specific concerns to relevant clusters and organisations, in order to inform continual improvement in the response.

➜ Track actions taken to respond to major issues and report changes made by relevant clusters and agencies back to the original sources of feedback, as well as the Government, ICC and HCT.

➜ Report to decision-makers (humanitarian organisations, government, donors) and public on feedback findings through appropriate fora, i.e. the HCT.

CDAC Network
27 Dingley Place
London
EC1V 8BR
UK

Companies House Registration No: 10571501

Author: Lois Austin, Independent Consultant
Website: http://www.cdacnetwork.org/